



THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Charlotte Amalie, V.I. 00802
340-774-0001

**VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL CARIBBEAN AMERICAN
HERITAGE MONTH
AND VIRGIN ISLANDS FREEDOM WEEK 2019**

**BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE
UNITED STATES**

A PROCLAMATION

The Virgin Islands of the United States continues to contribute to the historic heritage narratives, honorable achievements of excellence, cultural legacy quests and self-determination liberties with its' unique diverse representation of the people, culture, heritage, technology and spirit of the Virgin Islands Caribbean Americas that complement annual observances in June of National Caribbean American Heritage Month and Virgin Islands Freedom Week from June 26th to July 3rd, 2019.

The annual June observance of National Caribbean American Heritage Month is designated for commemorations, recognitions and celebrations for people of Caribbean ancestry in the Virgin Islands, Caribbean Americas and globally to reaffirm their multicultural ties with Caribbeanisms. Respect and recognition are encouraged of ancestral traditions and heritages of the Caribbean Americas inclusive yet not limited to influences of Indigenous African, European, Asian and other cultural legacies within the Virgin Islands Caribbean Americas and beyond.

Many of our Caribbean ancestors were living as free and self-determined citizens in democratically ruled nations before Europeans came to Africa. Our African ancestors knew from their oral and written documentation the accomplishments of African People through the African continent and elsewhere in the fields of navigation, science, astronomy, math, medicine, masonry, and philosophy.

Our Caribbean ancestors fought for their freedom from the time they were captured and never stopped planning organizing, and fighting; whether overtly or covertly. Our ancestors were treated harshly on plantations, where some of the worst atrocities known to man or woman occurred, while the treasuries of Denmark, England, France, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Portugal benefitted from their free labor.

In 1833 Governor General Peter Von Scholten, the then Governor of the Danish West Indies, today the Virgin Islands of the United States, went to Denmark seeking new laws to deal with the enslaved African population; this coming on the heels of the freeing of the enslaved Africans in the English West Indies. Governor Von Scholten was able to obtain an ordinance in 1834 that allowed an enslaved African to purchase his freedom even against the objection of his owner, provided the enslaved African paid his designated full value.

On July 28, 1847, King Christen VIII of Denmark issued a decree abolishing slavery for all “*new born*”, but leaving slavery in place for another twelve years. This decree did not sit well with many enslaved Africans who realized that they would not live to see the day that they would be free.

Determined to seek an earlier resolution to outlaw slavery, Moses General Buddhoe Gottlieb, an educated master sugar boiler from La Grange, and Admiral Martin King, his lieutenant from a mid-island plantation, planned a strategy to organize the enslaved Africans to end the oppressive system.

On July 2, 1848, a call went out to enslaved Africans to come to Fort Frederik in the town Frederiksted, where by midnight some 8000 enslaved Africans had gathered. Fearing the worst, plantation owners and their children deserted their houses and took to the boats and ships anchored in the harbor while some of the owners and the militia barricaded themselves in the Fort, in churches and anywhere else that they considered safe.

On July 3, 1848, the enslaved Africans pulled up the whipping post and heaved it into the sea, and a call was sent out for military assistance. When the military assistance arrived they were confronted by so large a crowd that they became so terrified and took refuge behind the wall of the Fort. Upon arrival of the noon hour, Moses Gottlieb demanded freedom for all or they would burn down the town of Frederiksted and rest of St. Croix, and the hour was extended to 4 p.m. Minutes before 4 p.m. Governor General Peter Von Scholten, who recently had returned from St. Thomas, arrived at Fort Frederik in the town of Frederiksted, and after being briefed about the events that had occurred in the town, walked to a commanding post and announced that “*All unfree in the Danish West Indies are from today free*”, and thus on July 3, 1848, due to their heroic efforts, the enslaved Africans in Frederiksted, St. Croix succeeded in freeing all unfree persons in the Danish West Indies from the bonds of chattel. This day carries enduring historic significance.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Albert Bryan Jr., Governor of the Virgin Islands of the United States by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Revised Organic Act of 1954, as amended, do hereby proclaim the week of June 26th to July 3, 2019 as *Virgin Islands Freedom Week* and the month of June as *Virgin Islands National Caribbean American Heritage Month* in the Virgin Islands of the United States. I urge all people of the Virgin Islands to take a moment and reflect that had it not been for the brave efforts of our ancestors that came before us, we would have never been able to enjoy and experience the freedoms that we have today, and to also remember our heritage; it is who we are as a people and a culture.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Government of the Virgin Islands of the United States to be affixed at Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, this 26 day of June, 2019. A.D.





Albert Bryan Jr.
Governor